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STATE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA RENAMED
FOR CELEBRATED SPORTSMAN GEORGE DAREY

LENOX - Conservationists, state officials, family, and friends from all over the Commonwealth of Massachusetts gathered today at a surprise renaming ceremony at the 818-acre George L. Darey Housatonic Valley Wildlife Management Area. Officials bestowed the honor on Mr. Darey for a lifetime committed to the conservation of natural resources in Massachusetts. A plaque was unveiled at the site of the ceremony and a celebratory luncheon sponsored by the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen followed.

“George Darey has dedicated his adult life to education, historic and cultural preservation, civic involvement and most of all conservation,” said Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Herzfelder. “Naming this magnificent conservation land for George is a fitting tribute, particularly since we are in his hometown and for all he has done to protect the Housatonic River and habitat in this area.”

“George is well known and respected by sportsmen and women and conservationists in Berkshire County and throughout Massachusetts,” said David Peters, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. “The reasons for that are simple: he is passionate, committed, dedicated, and hard working. Most of all, George is effective when it comes to the issues that are near and dear to the hearts of sportsman and environmentalists everywhere.”

The George L. Darey Housatonic Valley Wildlife Management Area borders the Housatonic River in the towns of Pittsfield, Lenox, and Lee. The 818-acre property is managed by the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife and is popular with hunters, anglers, canoeists, and wildlife watchers. Several open marshes, wooded swamps, open fields, forested areas along with backwaters and oxbows provide exceptional habitat for all types of waterfowl, white-tailed deer, woodcock, wading birds, songbirds, and furbearers such as beaver, muskrat and otter. The Housatonic River and Yokum Brook provide excellent fishing opportunities as well, though a public health advisory has been issued on the consumption of non-stocked fish in much of the Housatonic River due to PCB contamination.

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“George Darey has been an incredibly effective citizen advocate for the environment,” said Wayne MacCallum, Director of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. “The naming of this property to honor George recognizes and celebrates the significant contributions that he has made.”

At the ceremony, officials also announced special regulations for fishing on the Housatonic River. The regulations established two catch and release only sections for anglers, the first affecting about six miles of the river in the town of Lee, from Route 20 downstream to the Willow Mill Dam. The second section in Stockbridge runs about one mile from the Glendale Dam downstream to the railroad crossing. Only artificial lures may be used in the catch and release areas, the possession of bait is prohibited, and any fish caught must be released. Outside the catch and release boundaries on the entire stretch of the Housatonic River, a possession limit was set of one trout of 20 inches or larger. Additionally, fishing is prohibited from June 15th through August 31st at the following posted locations: 100 feet from the mouths of Beartown Brook, Goose Pond Brook, Hop Brook, and Mohawk Brook and 100 feet both upstream and downstream on the Housatonic River where these brooks empty into the river. The special regulations are designed to foster holdover trout, larger fish, and more diverse fishing opportunities.

“I have never been much on naming places for people,” said George Wislocki, founder and past president of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. “However, in this instance, I can’t think of anyone who better represents all the people in the past and today who have worked to protect this glorious area.”

-George Darey bio to follow-

George Darey Bio:

George L. Darey is a native of Lenox and grew up fishing its rivers, including the Housatonic, and hunting its woods. In addition to hunting and fishing he has been actively involved in canoe racing, teaching cross country skiing to local student athletes, and leading power walks. He is a retired high school teacher who taught science, history, reading and study skills at Mahar Regional High School in Orange and Waconah Regional High School in Dalton, where he retired after 25 years of teaching in 1983.

Mr. Darey was a member of the Lenox Conservation Commission and a charter member of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions. He served on the Lenox Board of Selectmen for more than 15 years, leading the town in recognizing the importance of incorporating conservation values in its growth and development. He was a founder of the Housatonic River Initiative, which has addressed PCB pollution in the river and played a key role in its cleanup. He was also a founding member and an active director of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council and the Sportsmen for Land Preservation, two active land conservation organizations in the Berkshires. Mr. Darey is active in historical and cultural preservation efforts as well, and has worked to preserve the Edith Wharton Estate and helped secure a permanent home for the nonprofit Shakespeare Company, both in Lenox. His leadership role in environmental stewardship was recognized in 1996 when he was presented a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency award.

Mr. Darey was appointed to the Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife Board, which directs the operations of the state Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, in 1978 and has served as Chairman since 1981. He has provided strong and active leadership on the Board throughout his tenure. Some of his major accomplishments include the establishment of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program; development of a strong program for the acquisition of wildlife lands; passage of the wildlands stamp act, supported by the state's sportsmen, that provides funds from fishing and hunting license sales for the acquisition of open space; and developing and obtaining support for the Commonwealth's biodiversity initiative and outstanding forest management program recently recognized by the Society of American Foresters.

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